NOTICES ON THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF C. C. RAFN.

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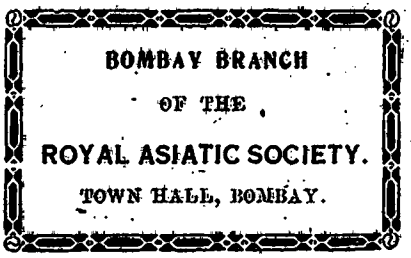

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Notices on the Life & Writings of Carl Christian Rafn.
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NECROLOGICAL NOTICES

ON

C. C. RAFN,

COUNSELLOR OF CONFERENCE, PERMANENT SECRETARY OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF NORTHERN ANTIQUARIES &c. &c.

RAFN (CARL CHRISTIAN) is born at Braesborg in the island of Funen in Denmark, the 16th January 1795. He made his first studies at the house of his father, and since at the college of Odense, whence he went to Copenhagen in 1814, and was entered at the University the same year. Already at the college of Odense he devoted himself to the study of the Icelandic tongue, which in the old time was the universal language of the whole North, where, as even in Iceland, it was called »*dönsk tunga*« or »*norræna*« (Danish or Old-Northern tongue). After his arrival at the University he devoted himself with still greater zeal to the study of this tongue. From 1821, he was for several years employed at the University Library, where an important task was committed to his charge, viz.: to make a revision of the considerable collection of old Icelandic and Old-Northern manuscripts, called the Arna-Magnean, and bequeathed to the public in the year 1730 by Arni Magnusson. This collection, which bears the name of the donor, consists of about 2000 volumes of most excellent manu-

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scripts of almost all ancient laws of the peoples of the North, as well as the ancient historical Scandinavian works. This revision facilitated in a great degree the study, to which he afterwards devoted all his energy.

In the year 1821 he began his literary career with a Danish translation of the mythico-historic sagas of the North. This work was published in 3 volumes.

In the year 1825 he was promoted to the degree of Doctor philosophiæ and the year after he was nominated Professor; in the year 1830 he took the degree of Doctor of law, and the same year he was appointed member of the Royal Committees, established to settle the plan of the Arna-Magnean institution and for the conservation of the antiquities and ancient monuments of the kingdom. In the year 1839 the King of Denmark nominated him Counsellor of State.

Owing to his energy a public and diocesan library was founded in Iceland in the year 1818; public institutions of the same kind were afterwards established, by his proposal, at Thorshavn in the Faeroe Islands, 1827, and at Godthaab, for the Danish colonies in Greenland, 1829.

The appreciation of the importance of the ancient literature of the North, the immense number of manuscripts containing this literature, and lastly the persuasion, that this literature, like that of Greece and Rome, must one day be better known and more studied, gave him the idea of trying the establishment of a public and permanent institution with the view of facilitating the study and propagating the knowledge of this literature. After having prepared the performance of his plan, both in Iceland and in Scandinavia, he invited several of his

friends to join him, to accelerate the accomplishment of the plan, and in a constituent meeting of the antiquaries of the North, which met the 26th January 1825, he made known the rules for the Society, which he intended to establish, and all the essential provisions of these rules were admitted. He was appointed Secretary of the Society, and director of the scientific committees of the same; and was charged with these functions till his death. He was, moreover charged with the editing of all the works, published by the Society, which already at the beginning of the year 1856. numbered 90 volumes.

The Society having, during three years, given satisfactory proofs of its activity, the King of Denmark made it a public and Royal institution, which from that time was to have the name of: *hið Konungliga Norræna Fornfræða Félag, The Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries.* The important aim of the Society and the energy, which it has evinced for that purpose, has successively been recognised through the whole of Europe, as well as in other parts of the world, and there are amongst the »Fellows and Founders« of the Society several men of highest note in Europe, Asia and America, such as sovereigns, statesmen and celebrated scholars in these three parts of the world.

Amongst the works, published by the Society, wherein he took the most active part, was the first series of the historic sagas, *Fornmanna Sögur,* published in the original text with a Latin and Danish translation, in 36 volumes. He has himself in the years 1829 and 1830 published separately the mythico-historic sagas, »*Fornaldar-Sögur Norðrlanda*«, with a translation, in 7 volumes; a critical and complete edition, collected from about 100 ancient manuscripts on parchment and other ancient Icelandic

books; and moreover the history of the inhabitants of Faeroe-islands, »*Færeyinga-Saga*«. But of all the works he has published, no one shows more clearly the value of the important treasures, laid down in the ancient literature of the North, than

Antiquités Américaines d'après les monuments historiques des Islandais et des anciens Scandinaves; *Antiquitates Americanæ*, sive Scriptores Septentrionales rerum Ante-Columbiarum in America. In this work is to be found a collection of all the records, contained in the old sagas, the annals and the geographical works of the North, on the voyages of discovery, undertaken by the ancient Scandinavians in America, during the 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th century. This work (consisting of 502 and L pages imperial 4to) was published under the auspices of the Society at Copenhagen in the year 1837, with 18 large engravings, containing facsimiles of manuscripts, maps and drawings of the monuments. By the tracts and the explicative notes, with which he has accompanied the critic edition of these valuable historical documents, as well as by inquiries, founded on the nautical, geographical and astronomical informations, laid down in the ancient manuscripts, he has proved, in a manner most convincing, the discovery of the northern coast of America by the ancient Scandinavians, and their reiterated visits to these countries, and chiefly their sojourn or settlement in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Mr. Rafn has also the great merit of having, by this work, brought these events, formerly doubted by so many celebrated scholars out of Europe, to such an incontestable clearness, that no one can, for the future, deny the truth and exactness of these historical facts. He has tried

to raise an imperishable monument to the honour of the ancient Scandinavians, which powerfully contributes to appreciate the aim of the institution to which he devoted his indefatigable energy; and it must be confessed, that his essay was crowned with the most remarkable success. His memoir on the discovery of America has been translated in most languages, generally known, and his grand work has also given birth to a multitude of treatises upon the same subject, both in America and Europe. Thus, while this memoir was published in the eastern countries, almost at the same time in Russian, Polish, Bohemian, New-Greek and in the language of the Magyars, the Spanish and Portuguese authors brought it to the knowledge of their countrymen, what with translations, what with extracts or separate treatises, published in Madrid, Havanna, Caraccas, Rio de Janeiro, Valparaiso in the Republic of Chili, and at Lima in Peru. In order to facilitate the study of the ancient manuscripts in the original text, Mr. George P. Marsh of Burlington in Vermont, afterwards Minister-Resident of North-America in Constantinople, published in 1838 a compendious grammar of the Old-Northern or Icelandic language with the title of: »A Compendious Grammar of the Old-Northern or Icelandic language, compiled and translated from the Grammars of Rask.«

The ancient original works, that have served as basis for the Antiquitates Americanæ, have been examined by a number of European scholars, who have entirely agreed with Mr. Rafn in his statements, with regard to the situation of the countries, discovered in America by the ancient Scandinavians. Amongst these scholars we shall here mention Alexander v. Humboldt, who in his work,

called »Kosmos« (Vol. II. p. 269-272, the German edition) speaks of voyages of discovery in HELLULAND (now-a-days the island of Terra-nova), in MARKLAND (Nova Scotia and the environs of Saint Laurents Bay) and in VINLAND (Massachusetts).

A prospect of the Antiquitates Americanæ and of the whole ante-Columbian literature has been published by the Earl of Ellesmere in his work, entitled: »Guide to Northern Archæology for the use of English readers«. London 1848. The universal Dictionary of the authors of the kingdom of Denmark by Th. H. Erslew (Vol. II. p. 597-603) furnishes us with a similar prospect, enriched with a great quantity of particulars, where there is rendered account of the treatises made on this subject in almost all the great cities of the United States, which have been published either in the reviews of the country or in separate works, among others, in a treatise by Edward Everett, Governor of Massachusetts, published in Boston 1837, shortly after the editing of the work (see the North American Review, Jan. 1838, p. 161-203).

There has also been thrown light on the anti-Columbian times in the transatlantic world by two important works, the one of which is quite finished. Mr. RAFN has taken part in the editing of both these works. The first has been published in three volumes under the title of: »*Historical Monuments of Greenland*«, *Grönlands historiske Mindesmærker*. The collection of a number of manuscripts, that have served as basis for this work, and, besides, a prospect of the ancient geography of the arctic regions of America are owing to his pen. He has compared the records of the ancient manuscripts with the recent description of the ruins, found in Greenland by recent tra-

vellers, who, according to a proposal of his, have examined these regions at the cost of the Society of Antiquaries. By this means he has been able to determine the situation of the most important colonies, namely the settlements and dwellings, from where, in the beginning of the 11th century, the explorators set out on their voyage to Massachusetts and Rhode Island, who, in this point of view are entitled to an universal and historical importance. The second work, which has only been begun, is entitled: »*Islendinga-Sögur*« or »*Historical Monuments of Iceland*«. The author intended to publish a critic edition in several volumes of all the sagas, that in any way concern Iceland, which, according to the modern geographical system, is meant to be part of America.

However, having finished the Antiquitates Americanæ, the author was chiefly, under the auspices of the same institution, occupied with another voluminous work, the editing of which he was charged with. Thus the maritime expeditions, undertaken by the Northmen, to the remote seas of the western hemisphere, and their discovery of the new world in the 9th and 10th century are, by the enquiries laid down in the Antiquitates Americanæ, proved in a manner, as to make them a very remarkable fact in the history of the world. The exploits of the Northmen in the eastern countries during several successive centuries are, no doubt, worthy of a special attention, as they are of a nature to throw light on the darkness, in which this subject has been wrapped up to the present time. The part, the ancient Scandinavians have played in Russia under the name of »Varègues« and in Constantinople, under the name of »Vaerings«, has been remark-

able enough and has greatly influenced the events in these countries. The foundation of the Russian Empire by the Northmen and their achievements throughout the Empire are brought to evidence by the annals of Nestor; and as for their exploits in Turkey, by a work, written in 948 by the Emperor Constantin Porphyrogennete.

There were, accordingly, weighty motives, that made it desirable to have a collection of the dispersed records, regarding this subject, laid down in the Icelandic and Scandinavian writings. To comply with this desire, Mr. RAFN conceived the plan of this work. He has edited a complete collection of such historical documents, Icelandic and Scandinavian, that were capable of throwing light on the history of Russia and of the East from the remotest times down to the middle of the 15th century. The collection of these ancient relations is divided in two principal parts, viz.: 1, ancient narrations, in which myths are interwoven with history, poetry and traditions from the most remote antiquity; 2, narratives and records, purely historical, that make the principal part of the work. Besides, these documents are accompanied with a facsimile with an exact description of the most important parchments.

A Russian scholar, Etienne Sabinin, has edited an Icelandic grammar in his native language, which is published in 1849 by the Imperial Academy of Sciences of St. Petersburgh. This grammar was intended to facilitate for the Russians the study of the ancient language of the North, and of the Icelandic and Northern literature.

The work is published under the title of

»*Antiquités Russes* d'après les monuments historiques des Islandais et des anciens Scandinaves. Tome Ier XXXII

et 491, Tome II[d] XVI et 496 pages, format imperial in 4[to], avec 23 planches. Copenhague 1850, 1852.«

The review of the historico-philological class of the Imperial Academy of Sciences of St. Petersburgh (Tome VII p. 129) contains some critical remarks on this work by Mr. Kunik, a historian and an academian. He expresses himself as follows:

»Eigthy five years have elapsed, since the author of the veritable critical analysis of the Russian history made a propósal of founding a »department« of scholars, who were to be charged with the task of collecting and publishing the Icelandic records concerning Russia.«

»If we others, heirs to their task, are exempted from the shame of inscribing in 1864 the pious wish of Schlözer, as a desire of hundred years, in the great book of debts of the Russian historiography, we confess, that this is only owing to the glorious resolution, the unremitting zeal and the indefatigable perseverance of Mr. Rafn. To the important services already rendered by this Danish scholar to Europe and Asia, we have to add a new one, which he has, by the present work, rendered to the vast empire, which Peter the Great would have considered as a particular part of the world.«

This work, of which we have spoken, contains a treasure of ancient records, full of interest, and apt to throw a new light on the ancient history and the ancient geography of the eastern Europe.

The Russian and Byzántine annals are of accord with regard to the active part, which the Scandinavian warriors took in the exploits of this epoch. The ancient sagas of the North furnish us, in a like manner, with ample informations about the chivalrous adventures of

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these Scandinavian warriors. Having returned home, they acquainted their countrymen with the events in which they had taken part or which they had been witnesses to, and it is easy to understand, that their narratives, which have come down to us through the sagas, are apt to throw light on the records of these old times.

The two volumes, that have been published, of the above work, contain a collection of authentic documents, written in Icelandic or in the ancient language of the North, which are highly adapted to elucidate the ancient history of the eastern countries. These writings are followed by another class of historical sources, viz.: the runic inscriptions, making mention of warriors, whom the desire to know other countries had induced to visit the East, and especially of the Varègues in Gardarike (Russia) and the Vaerings in the body-guard of the Emperor of Greece. These inscriptions were to be published by him in a separate work, entitled:

»Antiquités de L'Orient, monuments runographiques.«

The first part, that has already appeared, of this work, treats of the runic inscription of Piræus. Since the old time, and probably since the time of Themistocle, a big lion of marble has been standing at the Port of Piræus. This lion, which gave to the port the name of the »Porto Leone«, was brought as a trophy from Greece to Venice in 1688 by Morosini. It was erected in the front of the arsenal of this last city, where it is still to be seen. More than one century elapsed, before anybody was able to make out the inscription on the flanks of this lion. For many years ago inscriptions have been engraved thereon, but time has, to such a degree effaced their traces, as to render them hardly visible, even to the eyes

of the most versed in interpreting similar vestiges of antiquity. Several archæologists have been of opinion that they were Northern runes, but their efforts to interpret them, have been in vain; others, on the contrary, have thought, that in these traces were to be found the ancient Greek, Pelasgic or Asiatic characters. In order to come to a sure result, as far as possible, Mr. Rafn tried to procure the best drawings of these ancient inscriptions, that were then to be had. By means of plaster-casts, and afterwards by help of several photographs, but especially by the assistance of his countryman Mr. F. de Bertouch, who during several months submitted the inscription to a most persevering examination under the influence of different sort of light, he succeeded in acquiring a most complete apparatus for the interpreting of these faint and almost invisible traces of the antiquity. For this end he undertook a voyage to Venice, in order to examine this curious monument with his own eyes. After so many reiterated trials, his indefatigable efforts were crowned with the most splendid success, so as to enable him to make out the greater part of this ancient inscription, the meaning of which he interprets as follows:

The inscription on the flanks of this remarkable lion makes us also acquainted with the names of several »Vaerings«, telling us that they took the Port (Piræus) and that their chief, Harold the High, imposed on the inhabitants considerable fines in silver, on account of the insurrection of the Greek people. Mr. Rafn presumes, that the said Harold was brother to king Olaf the Saint. This Harold served, in his youth, in the body-guard of the Greek Emperors (from 1033 to 1044), and after his return to Norway he became king of that country, and

has, in the history, got the surname of Harðráði (severe). The event, of which there is question in the inscription, was an insurrection raised by the Bulgarians under Deleen, against the Emperor. Michel Paphlagonian.

Many able runologists and scholars in the ancient language of the North have approved the interpretation, made by Mr. Rafn, of this ancient inscription. The German scholar, Jacob Grimm, is one among the number, that consider this interpretation as satisfactory (Monatsberiehte der Königl. Akad. der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, 23. October 1856).

In the Annals of the Archæology of the North, and in the Archæologic Review Mr. Rafn has furnished us with descriptions and interpretations of several runic inscriptions of the North, as well as in the Memoirs of Northern Antiquaries (1845-1849, p. 286-352):

»Remarks on a Danish runic stone from the 11th century, found in 1852 in the Central-Part of London«; and Runic Inscriptions, in which the Western Countries are alluded to.«

These few remarks on the astonishing activity of Mr. Rafn, will do more for the appreciation of his great merit, than an extensive biographical treatise, whatsoever its length might be.

In spite of delicate health, during the latter years, he was always indefatigable and inspired with a noble passion for the science, to which he had devoted his life, and to the last he was occupied with vast plans and with voluminous works for the benefit of the Northern antiquity. Having undergone a painful operation, Mr. Rafn, whose works are known far and wide out of Denmark, expired in Copenhagen the 20th October 1864, where his

widow and five children, four daughters and one son, Carl Hjalmar, have to regret the loss of the best husband and the most tender-hearted father.

As he was cherished by his family, he never felt so happy as in the midst of his children, whose education and future well-being lay him near at heart. Thus he had the consolation, during his severe sufferings, always to see his wife and children gathered round his sickbed, exerting themselves to soothe his last moments.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS

OR

COMMUNICATED IN PRIVATE LETTERS ON THE CHIEF WORKS

OF

C. C. RAFN.

Printed as manuscript for his friends.

ANTIQUITATES AMERICANÆ.

OPINIONS OF THE EUROPEAN PRESS.

Gelehrte Anzeigen der königlich bayerschen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Schmeller). München 1839. Page 626.

Wir gönnen dem Italiener, Spanier, Portugiesen gerne den gerechten Stolz, den er darin setzt, dass an die grosse Thatsache der Entdeckung einer neuen Welt auf ewige Zeit Namen geknüpft sind, die er unter die seinigen zählt. Nicht anders werden wir gegen unsere Brüder im hohen Norden gesonnen seyn, wenn sie wiederholt, und diessmal mit vollständiger Vorlage aller Beweismittel, auf den Antheil zurückkommen, der *ihren* Voraltern wenigstens an der Einleitung jener weltgeschichtlichen Thatsache zuzumessen seyn möchte.

Heidelberger Jahrbücher der Literatur 1839 p. 130.

Allein welcher Nation der alten Welt gebühret der Ruhm, zuerst die Küsten der neuen Welt geschauet und betreten zu haben? Die Gelehrten aller Völker, welche

glauben auf diesen Ruhm Ansprüche machen zu dürfen, sollten sich bemühen, jede in ihrem Vaterlande, noch vorhandenen Documente, durch die sie diese ihre Ansprüche zu begründen vermögen, wettstreitend mit einander an Ort und Stelle vollständig an das Licht zu bringen.

C. C. Rafn in Kopenhagen vertritt, gleich durchdrungen von hohem wissenschaftlichen Geiste und edelm Nationalgefühle, die Ehre der Nordmänner, d. i. nicht bloss der Dänen, sondern auch der Norweger und Schweden, und gibt uns in dem vorliegenden Werke nicht bloss die vollständigen bisher zum Theile noch ganz unbekannt gewesenen Urkunden selber (so weit sie noch vorhanden sind und aufzufinden waren) über die Fahrten dieser Nordmänner nach America und deren Niederlassungen daselbst, sondern er thut auch deren historische Zuverlässigkeit auf das unwidersprechlichste dar.

Page 149. Und so erhalten die gegebenen höchst interessanten Thatsachen auf jede Weise ihre unumstösslichste Bestätigung. Das vorliegende Werk ist eines der für die Weltgeschichte wichtigsten, die in neuerer Zeit erschienen sind; ja wir dürfen es ein wahrhaft welthistorisches heissen, nicht nur um der bereits an das Licht gestellten Thatsache, sondern auch um der vielen weitern Untersuchungen willen, die es erst noch sehr anregen wird.

Necrolivonica von F. Kruse. Dorpat 1842. B, Page 16.

Die ANTIQUITATES AMERICANÆ der Königl. Dänischen Gesellschaft für Alterthümer, ein Werk, welches von Wichtigkeit für die ganze Nordische Geschichte und die Alterthümer Scandinaviens seines Gleichen sucht und ein ewiges Monument der Königl. Dänischen Regierung als

Beschützerin ächt wissenschaftlicher antiquarischer Studien bleiben wird, gibt diese schönen nie geahneten Aufschlüsse (die Entdeckung Americas im 10ten Jahrhundert) und — Beweise dazu.

Snorre Sturlesons Norske Kongers Sagaer (Snorre Sturleson's Sagas of the Kings of Norway), translated by Jacob Aall, Christiania (Norway) 1839.

Page 213. We will now attempt to ascertain more precisely the points at which these Northmen touched, and which brought them into connexion with America. In doing which we shall be guided by the author of the ANTIQUITATES AMERICANÆ, who, by collecting all the Saga accounts thereunto relating, by fixing the places visited, and by raising conjecture to historical evidence, has successfully closed one of the most interesting investigations that have been accomplished by antiquarian research in our time.

Page 214. In this respect the correspondence between the Secretary of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries of Copenhagen and the Secretary of the Historical Society of Rhode Island, Providence, N. A., is very interesting. The questions submitted to the American scholars have for their object to ascertain the spot where Leifsbudir were erected, and to learn how far the description given by our forefathers corresponds with the nature of the country in question; and the answers are such as to leave no doubt as to the correctness of the Danish scholar's opinion.

Page 217. The North has accordingly every reason to be grateful to the Royal Society of Northern Anti-

quaries, and particularly to Professor Rafn, who, with such indefatigable perseverance, with so much knowledge of the subject and critical acumen, has elucidated a portion of ancient history hitherto so obscure and at the same time so interesting. It must likewise be highly gratifying to the Northman, when he sees the scholars of America meeting the antiquarians of the North with the most ready zeal, in order to obtain a correct result from these investigations.

We must also in this respect refer to the great work alluded to, and to the correspondense carried on between its author and American scholars. Every line breathes, on the one hand, an impartial zeal to discover the truth, on the other, a desire to communicate all that can contribute to the elucidation of the subject: Under such fortunate circumstances we need not be surprised that, of late, a strong light has arisen to illuminate this obscure part of our history.

The author of this will have completely attained his object, if he shall have succeeded in turning the attention of his antiquarian countrymen to this monument of the new world, and to the work which so admirably illustrates this portion of the history of our olden time — a work, of which the perusal has afforded him some of the most agreeable hours that he has ever spent in antiquarian researches.

Journal de La Haye 1839, n° 31.

Cet ouvrage intéressant a répandu un nouveau jour sur ce fait accompli, au point qu'il ne saurait plus exister aucun doute à ce sujet. L'honneur de la solution de cette

importante question revient exclusivement à M.-C.-C. Rafn, secrétaire de la Société Royale des Antiquaires du Nord de Copenhague. C'est cet homme célèbre, qui, avec une persévérance peu commune et très-fatigante, surtout pour les yeux, a employé sept ans à déchiffrer les manuscrits islandais dont il s'agit, rendus presque illisibles par le temps, et à traduire ce qu'ils contiennent d'intéressant; c'est lui qui, par ses lumineuses recherches, a déterminé la situation probable des pays et des lieux mentionnés dans ces vieux manuscrits islandais. M. Rafn peut donc revendiquer à juste titre l'honneur d'avoir répandu un jour tout nouveau et très éclatant sur l'ancienne histoire du Nord et sur celle de l'Amérique-Septentrionale. C'est ainsi que son ouvrage a eu un succès extraordinaire, non seulement en Europe, par traduction, dans les journaux scientifiques, mais aussi dans l'Amérique du Nord, et c'est ce qui lui a assuré un grand nom jusque dans le Nouveau-Monde comme une juste récompense d'un si immense travail.

The Discovery of America by the Northmen, in the Tenth Century. By North Ludlow Beamish. London 1841. Preface p. 1.

This interesting publication, the fruit of great literary labour, and extensive research, clearly shews that the eastern coast of North America was discovered and colonized by the Northmen *more than five-hundred years* before the reputed discovery of Columbus.

These facts rest upon the authority of ancient Icelandic manuscripts preserved in the Royal and University Libraries of Copenhagen, and which have now been, for

the first time, translated and made public, — and the whole is accompanied by introductory observations, philological and historical remarks, as well as archæological and geographical disquisitions of high interest and value.

The design of the writer of the following pages is to put before the public in a cheap and compendious form, those parts of Rafn's work, which he considered were likely to prove most interesting to British readers; — and free use has been made of the copious and lucid notes and commentaries of the learned Editor, to explain or illustrate the various etymological, historical and geographical points which call for observation.

The Northmen in New England, or America in the Tenth Century. Boston 1839. Preface p. VII. & The discovery of America by the Northmen in the Tenth Century. By Joshua Toulmin Smith. London 1839. Preface p. IV-V.

New England may be said to have become *classic ground*, since the discoveries of the Northmen have become generally known. To all who take interest in the history of the world, in the history of human enterprise, in the history of geographical science, in the history of the advance of nations and the human mind, these discoveries must be interesting. The circumstances under which they were made should make them of an interest surpassing that attending the discoveries of any modern navigator, — Columbus himself, and Cabot, not excepted.

That interest can, in no degree, be confined to the inhabitants of the lands themselves thus discovered. It must be felt throughout the civilized world.

The Foreign Quarterly Review n° XLI. April 1838.

P. 90. Those narratives are the most ingenious, unpretending documents ever penned. They are, it is true, sometimes obscure; and as many points which interest us at the present day appeared to their authors to have little importance, they often fail to furnish the details necessary for the complete elucidation of the matters they treat of. Still the unbiassed, impartial reader cannot refuse his entire confidence to their general tenor, nor deny that they seem characterized by the highest degree of accuracy and fidelity which can be conceived to belong to primitive history, derived wholly from tradition and composed from memory.

P. 105. We have now related the history of the discovery of Vinland by the Northmen, and we do not think that there are many who will feel inclined to dispute its truth. It has throughout the substance and the colour of reality. Nothing can be more plain, natural, or vivid, and it is even, in some respects, remarkably circumstantial.

P. 113. The more narrowly we examine the histories of Erik the Red and of Thorfinn Karlsefne, the more confidence do we feel in the narrative of discoveries there presented to us.

The Foreign Quarterly Review n° XLII published in July 1838

p. 466. Leitfaden zur nordischen Alterthumskunde.

The Northern Society of Antiquaries, by whom this valuable little guide is published, has of late attracted considerable attention to its labours, by the unexpected disclosure of its interesting records relative to American antiquities, a field apparently so remote from the proper scene of its investigations. Such researches into past

times, and regard shown for the works and deeds of the ancestors of our common race, betoken a healthy state of public feeling, and a generous sympathy with man, that cannot be too widely shared and propagated. Hence we look with affection upon works like the presents &c.

Nouvelles annales des voyages, de la géographie, de l'histoire et de l'archéologie, rédigées par M. V.-A. MALTE-BRUN, secrétaire de la commission centrale de la société de géographie de Paris, membre de plusieurs sociétés savantes. Août, 1858. P. 253.

Le résultat des recherches géographiques de M. C.-C. Rafn sur la situation du *Helluland*, du *Markland* et du *Vinland*, a été admis dans l'ouvrage intitulé *Cosmos* par le baron Alexandre Humboldt, qui y donne une adhésion complète. Un pays situé plus au midi était nommé *Hvitramannaland* (terre des hommes blancs) ou *Irland it Mikla* (la Grande-Irlande) par les anciens Scandinaves. M. Rafn émet l'opinion que ce pays nous représente la Caroline du nord et du sud, la Géorgie et la Floride. Are Frode, l'historiographe le plus ancien de l'Islande, nous raconte que son aïeul Are Marson arriva en 983 dans ce pays où il reçut le baptême. Le même pays, la Grande Irlande *(Irland it Mikla, Irlandch el-Kabirah)* a encore été mentionné par ABOU ABDALLAH MOHAMMED EDRISI, géographe arabe du 12e siècle, qui était né à Ceuta en 1099, et qui avait fait ses études à Cordoue. Ce fut à l'invitation de Roger II, roi de Sicile (1130-1157), que cet auteur arabe rédigea son ouvrage; et il doit sans doute le nom mentionné et plusieurs remarques sur le Nord à ses rapports avec les Normands employés à la cour de Palerme.

OPINIONS OF THE AMERICAN PRESS.

The Western Messenger. Louisville, Kentucky, 1838. Vol. V p. 217.

The fame of this important work so long preceded its arrival with us, that we had been made pretty fully acquainted with its contents, through the medium of Eastern Journals, before we had the pleasure of examining it for ourselves. Many of our readers have probably become acquainted with it in the same way. But considering it as we do, the most important contribution that has ever been made to the geographical history of this country, we lay before our readers, though at a somewhat late hour, a view of the most important facts presented in the work before us.

The North American Review n° XCVIII. January 1838. P. 161-203.

P. 161-162. This is a work of great interest. It has long been expected with impatience. Its editor, Mr. C. C. Rafn, is entitled to the cordial thanks of the student of the history of American geography, for the learned labor bestowed on the publication; nor are we less indebted to the Royal Society of Antiquaries at Copenhagen, under whose auspices the work has been brought before the public, and at whose expense the valuable engravings contained in it were executed. It has fallen into our hands, while the last sheets of this number of our Journal are passing through the press. But we are well aware of the curiosity relative to its contents, which has been excited in advance; we have accordingly given it as thorough an examination as we have been able, and hasten to lay the result before our

readers. It is a work to be diligently studied rather than eagerly run through; and our object in this article is not to supersede the necessity of a perusal, but rather, by giving the reading public in general an idea of the richness and importance of the contents of the volume, to induce every one who takes an interest in the history of our geography, to become thoroughly acquainted with it.

P. 189-190. To the discussion of the subject of Digthon Rock, succeeds a highly skilful and ingenious geographical commentary, the object of which is to strengthen the main doctrines historically established in the previously exhibited documents, by pointing out their conformity with the present features of the coast, quality of the soil, and character of the climate.

So happily is this part of the discussion managed, that the reader is irresistibly borne along with the commentator, and finds it hard to withhold his assent, even on points where the imagination seems to have contributed some share to the resemblance.

A map of Iceland in the year 1000; a map of Greenland, of the navigation of the Northmen, and of Vinland, conclude this highly important and valuable publication.

P. 193. Of the authenticity of the manuscripts there is not a shadow of the doubt; of the age of some of them there is no question.

P. 202-203. With these remarks we dismiss the subject for the present, renewing our thanks to M. Rafn, the learned and indefatigable editor of the volume before us and to the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries, under whose patronage he has been enabled to bring it before the public, in so handsome a style of typography. It is

one of the most valuable contributions ever made to the study of the history and geography of our continent.

The United States Magazine and Democratic Review. Vol. 2 p. 86.

The work is in the highest degree creditable to the Society, and forms a most valuable addition to the geographical literature of the western continent.

P. 155. It is certainly a singular coincidence, if it be an accidental one, that the place to which we are almost irresistibly led by an overwhelming mass of evidence from so many separate and independent sources, as to seat of the settlement of the Northmen, should still retain a name so nearly resembling that which they gave to it.

P. 156. The credibility of the general conclusions to be drawn from the Chronicles rest on evidence entirely indisputable.

P. 157. The main facts in the narrative appear to us, as we have repeatedly remarked, to be satisfactorily attested, and we have no hesitation in receiving them as a portion of authentic history. They are in themselves probable, and are supported by as strong a body of testimony as can be produced, in favor of any historical narrative of which the scene is laid in times and countries distinguished by an imperfect state of civilization. The identity of Wineland with Massachusetts and Rhode Island, also appears to be fully proved.

Providence and Pawtucket Advertiser. Aug. 2. 1838.

George Folsom Esq. of New York, a gentleman well versed in American History has, since the publication of

the »ANTIQUITATES AMERICANE« by the Danish Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries, devoted himself to the study of the Icelandic Literature. Mr. F. delivered a course of Lectures last winter in New-York on the Voyages of the Scandinavians.

Kosmos. Entwurf einer physischen Weltbeschreibung von Alexander von Humboldt. 2ter Band. Stutlgart und Tübingen 1847.

S. 272. Wir sind bisher sorgfältig auf historischem Boden geblieben. Durch die kritischen, nicht genug zu lobenden Bemühungen von Carl Christian Rafn und der Königlichen Gesellschaft für nordische Alterthumskunde in Kopenhagen sind die Sagas und Urkunden über die Fahrten der Normänner nach Helluland (Newfoundland), und Markland (der Mündung des St. Lorenz Flusses mit Nova Scotia) und nach Winland (Massachusetts) einzeln abgedruckt und befriedigend commentirt worden. Die Länge der Fahrt, die Richtung, in der man gesegelt, die Zeit des Aufganges und Unterganges der Sonne sind genau angegeben.

S. 269. Wenn die Bekanntschaft der Völker Europas mit dem westlichen Theile des Erdballes der Hauptgegenstand ist, welchem wir diesen Abschnitt widmen und um welchen sich als folgenreichste Begebenheit so viele Verhältnisse der richtigeren und grossartigeren Weltansicht gruppiren, so muss die unbestreitbar erste Entdeckung von Amerika in seinen nördlichen Theilen durch die Normänner von der Wiederauffindung desselben Continents in seinen tropischen Theilen streng geschieden werden. Als noch das Chalifat in Bagdad unter den Abbassiden blühete, wie in Persien die der Poesie so günstige Herr-

schaft der Samaniden, wurde Amerika um das Jahr 1000 von Leif, dem Sohne Eriks des Rothen, vom Norden her bis zu 41° ½ nördlicher Breite entdeckt.

Historia de la conquista de Mexico, con una ojeada preliminair sobre la antigua civilizacion de los Mexicanos, y con la vida de su conquistador Fernando Cortes. Escrita en ingles por W. Prescott, y traducida al español por Joaquin Navarro. Mexico. 1844. III. p. 14.

Hablando sobre el orígen de los habitantes de América, Mr. Duffot de Moffras en su obra de »Esploracion del Oregon y las Californias», dice que las curiosas investigaciones de los anticuarios del Norte han probado que las poblaciones europeas vinieron al nuevo continente pasando por la Groelandia. En efecto, segun los trabajos del profesor Rafn en Copenhague, ya no se puede dudar que los Daneses descubrieron la América desde el año de 994 hasta el de 1004. Habiendo salido de Dinamarca y de la Noruega, reconocieron desde luego la Islandia, que habian ocupado desde el año de 874. Un siglo de pues, el príncipe Eurico el Rojo desterrado á aquel pais, dirigió muchas espediciones hácia la costa oriental, á la que las antiguas leyendas islandesas y las relaciones latinas de los obispos de Groelandia designan bajo el nombre de Markland ó Vinland. Esta circunstancia se halla perfectamente confirmada por los monumentos scandinavos encontrados en el estado de Rhodeisland, en el de Massachussets cerca de Boston. Sin embargo, no puede determinarse de una manera cierta en qué época del siglo 13 ó 14 sucedió el gran cataqulismo que trastornó en cierto modo la Groelandia rodeándola

de una cinta de nieve que cambió su clima y producciones, é interrumpió verosímilmente sus relaciones con la costa oriental de América.

Cuestiones tan importantes para la historia de las naciones no han podido quedar por mucho tiempo sin resolverse gracias á las sábias investigaciones de los académicos de Copenhague secundadas por la ilustrada proteccion y perseverancia del gobierno dinamarques. Ya desde los siglos diez y siete y diez y ocho, Grocio y algunos escritores españoles, tales como Acosta en su historia di Indias, habian emitide una opinion semejante.

II. ANTIQUITÉS RUSSES.

Le Bulletin de la classe historico-philologique de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St. Pétersbourg (tome vii, p. 129 suiv.), contient sur cet ouvrage des »Remarques critiques« par M. Kunik, savant historien et académicien. Il s'y exprime en ces termes:

»Quatre-vingt-cinq ans se sont écoulés depuis que le fondateur de la véritable analyse critique de l'histoire russe fit la proposition d'établir un »département« de savants à qui l'on confierait la tâche de recueillir les rapports islandais sur la Russie pour les livrer ensuite au public.

Si maintenant nous autres héritiers de ses travaux sommes dispensés de la honte d'inscrire, en 1864, le pieux désir de Schlözer comme un désir de cent ans sur le grand livre de la dette de l'historiographie russe, nous reconnaîtrons que c'est uniquement à la résolution glorieuse, au zèle assidu et à la persévérance infatigable de M. Rafn que nous en sommes redevables. Aux services importants

rendus déjà par ce savant Danois à l'Europe et à l'Amérique, nous avons maintenant à ajouter un nouveau service qu'il rend par le présent ouvrage au vaste empire que Pierre le grand lui-même voulut que l'on considerât comme une partie de monde particulière.

Quant à nous autres qui avons fait de l'éclaircissement de l'histoire de la Russie l'objet de toutes nos études, il nous sierait mal d'exprimer uniquement par des paroles notre reconnaissance du don qui nous a été offert. L'expression de la vraie gratitude que nous devons à M. Rafn et à ses collaborateurs, sera celle de l'acte scientifique qui nous portera d'abord à nous mettre bien au fait des documents dont l'accès nous a été aplani, et à les apprécier ensuite selon leur valeur relative pour l'histoire de la Russie.

La question que nous avons avant tout à nous faire, c'est celle de savoir, si nous sommes assez préparés pour résoudre le premier de ces problèmes d'une manière conforme au degré de développement actuel de la science. Je prétends que sans hésiter il faut y répondre négativement: — nous ne le sommes pas.

En effet ce ne fut pas une tâche facile que d'achever la rédaction des Antiquités Russes. Les deux volumes qui vont suivre celui que nous avons sous les yeux, prouveront encore mieux combien il a fallu de persévérance, d'application et de connaissances étendues, pour venir à bout de toutes les difficultés attachées au recueil et à la publication de ces anciens documents. Pour qu'une pareille entreprise fût couronnée de succès, il était indispensable qu'elle fût exécutée par un homme qui possède, comme M. Rafn, l'exercice de 25 ans dans l'exploitation de l'ancienne littérature et des antiquités du Nord.»

III. ANTIQUITÉS DE L'ORIENT.

Inscription runique du Pirée interprétée par C. C. Rafn (Copenhagen, 1856, p. 254). With numerous wood-engravings.

The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Review July 1857. London, p. 66.

Who has not heard of the famous marble lion of Venice, inscribed with mystic characters? Who has not longed for an interpretation of the wondrous secret?

It is this which C. C. Rafn, the learned Secretary of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries, has here attempted.

He traces the history of this lion from the time of Pericles, or shortly after, and its erection in Athens, its removal to Venice in 1688 by Morosini, and the various theories with respect to the marks upon it, which gradually ripened into a conviction of their being Scandinavian Runes. After numberless attempts and kind assistance, he at last succeeds in decyphering them, and here lays before us the result.

He attributes the inscription to Harald Sigurdsson, the renowned king of Norway, but during his youth, when he was out as a Vering in the service of the Greek Emperor. It is intended to commemorate his exploits in the Piræus and Athens.

We have not space to go into details, nor is it necessary. The book is easely accessible. It is highly interesting, and, as far as we can judge, C. C. Rafn has been eminently successful in the main facts. The result may be considered as a new triumph of modern research.

The inscription is therefore from the year 1040 or thereabouts.

The book also contains a number of Runic monuments in various parts of the North, read and commented, and a valuable Runic Glossary.

Jon Sigurdsson, philologue islandais, Secrétaire de la Commission Arné-Magnéenne et Président de la diète de l'Islande:

Le langage de la partie essentielle de l'inscription, selon la lecture et l'interprétation que l'auteur nous en a faites, est l'islandais tout pur; il est à l'égard des expressions usitées autant que de la construction entièrement analogue à l'ancienne langue du Nord, telle qu'on la trouve dans les sagas et d'autres inscriptions.

Gisle Brynjulfsson, philologue islandais, Stipendiarius Arna-Magnæanus:

La lecture de l'inscription du lion de Venise doit nécessairement exciter de la sensation parmi les savants, de même qu'elle doit être accueillie avec joie par tous les historiens, comme un document nouveau et important pour la connaissance de l'histoire des Véringues et d'Athènes; car la partie essentielle en est toujours incontestable, quelle que soit du reste l'exactitude de tous les détails. Ainsi il est positif que les Véringues ont étouffé une insurrection qui avait éclaté dans cette ville.

J. H. Schröder, runologue suédois (Rapport à la Société Royale des sciences d'Upsala, 4 avril 1857):

Ce traité nous offre un des documents les plus remarquables que la littérature runique ait obtenus pendant

les temps derniers. L'inscription runique du Pirée, à laquelle Åkerblad, notre compatriote, a porté l'attention le premier, vient maintenant d'être interprétée d'une manière satisfaisante, et l'on est parvenu à prouver que c'est là un monument des exploits faits dans l'Orient par les Véringues et Harald Sigurdsson en 1040.

Pehr Wieselgren, historien suédois (Rapport à la Société des sciences de Gothenbourg, 23 mars 1858):

Le Danois F. de Bertouch a fait preuve du zèle le plus persévérant en s'acquittant de l'essai de nous procurer les dessins les plus corrects des traits faibles de cette inscription, et il a tiré parti d'un séjour prolongé à Venise pour reproduire avec fidélité et exactitude chaque trait visible. Il fit prendre en même temps plusieurs photographies de l'inscription regardée au jour le plus favorable. Ce ne fut qu'alors que l'interprête de runes le plus savant du Nord entreprit l'explication de ces inscriptions, lues auparavant d'une manière qui en rien n'a pu nous satisfaire. A la lecture de son interprétation personne ne peut douter que le lion de Venise ne nous offre un témoignage incontestable d'un des exploits faits par Harald Sigurdsson en chef des Véringues, quoiqu'il y porte le nom de Harald le grand, et que plus tard nous le connaissions comme roi de Norvége sous le surnom du sévère.

Sven Nilsson, archéologue suédois, professeur à l'université de Lund:

L'interprétation de l'inscription runique, sculptée sur les flancs du lion en marbre du Pirée, a parfaitement réussi, autant que j'en puis juger; nous y possédons par

conséquent un document d'un très haut intérêt pour l'ancienne histoire de la Scandinavie.

Jacob Grimm, linguiste allemand (Monatsberichte der Königl. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, October 1856):

Die scharfsinnige entzifferung der runen ist überraschend. Die almähliche, wiederholte betrachtung aller zeichnungen und abdrücke hat, nachdem man erst nur die entzifferung einzelner wörter erwartet und erstrebt hatte, zuletzt so weit geführt, dasz es möglich wurde in den vollständigen sinn der inschriften zu dringen und aus dem inhalt schlüsse auf ihre urheber und die zeit, in welcher sie eingehauen wurden, zu machen. Das werk ergibt willkommene aufschlüsse für die geschichte und für die nordischen runen. (Cfr. Gersdorf's Repertorium der deutschen Literatur 1857 p. 35-37).

Joh. Er. Wocel, archéologue de Bohême:

Durch die Herausgabe dieses Buches hat der Verfasser nicht nur die Literatur der Runen wesentlich bereichert, sondern auch die dunkle Periode der byzantinischen Geschichte des XI. Jahrhunderts durch einen kräftigen Lichtstrahl erhellt.

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